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VINTAGE HOLIDAY CARTOONS AT LAUNCHPAD

Extreme cartoon collector to screen vintage holiday animations

By Megan Riesz

The Brooklyn Paper

It is just not Christmas in Brooklyn without something vintage.

Projectionist and extreme cartoon collector Tom Stathes will show off his horde of ancient holiday-themed cartoons at Crown Heights arts community center LaunchPad on Dec. 21. But do not write it off as kids' stuff, Stathes said — it is a great learning opportunity for adults as well.



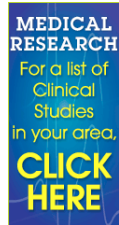
Stefano Giovannini

"It's important for the public to see these cartoons because in my humble opinion, watching them is like taking a trip back in time," Stathes said. "They are extremely educational and are living, moving relics of the past which show some things in our American culture that we miss, and also some things that we are proud of."

The Christmas cartoon celebration will include "Christmas Night," a Little King cartoon from 1933 that will be projected in 16-mm film, and a bevy of other material from the 1920s to the 1940s. The films on offer are just a small glimpse at Stathes' 1,000-print collection, which he began when he was about seven years old.

The 24-year-old animation archivist said he mostly grew up around adults and senior citizens, so he was always exposed to older technologies, including 16-mm films and projectors. His obsession with old animation started after he began watching "Felix the Cat" and early Mickey Mouse and Warner Brothers cartoons, which fed his insatiable curiosity about the history of early film.

"I was mesmerized by the experience of seeing a decades-old mechanical apparatus projecting an equally old copy of a film onto the wall and also quickly discovered that certain types of films could only be seen in those older mediums," Stathes said. "So I quickly got into seeking more and more 16-mm material and equipment."



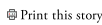
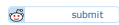
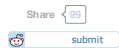
While continuing to collect as many silent-era cartoons as possible, Stathes formed his own traveling "Cartoon Carnival" in 2009 to offer screenings around the city. "Tom puts together really unique programs that will make you smile uncontrollably," said LaunchPad spokesman Zane Van Dusen. "The cartoons that he presents are beautiful works of art but also incredibly funny and entertaining."

The LaunchPad show will also include "Race Night Comedies," a series of short live-action films featuring silent-era comedians running races with numbers on their backs. Each audience member will get a ticket with a number, and one ticket will correspond to the winning racer's number in the film. The winner will receive a prize befitting the occasion, courtesy of film historian and cartoon researcher Nelson Hughes.

"Cartoon Carnival #21: Santa's Surprise" at LaunchPad [721 Franklin Ave. between Sterling and Park places in Crown Heights, (646) 494-7211, www.brooklynlaunchpad.org]. Dec. 21 at 8 pm, \$10 suggested donation.

Reach reporter Megan Riesz at mriesz@cnglocal.com or by calling (718) 260-4505. Follow her on Twitter @meganriesz.

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